

State Water Resources Control Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Liz Kanter
(916) 327-8239

WATER BOARD INVESTIGATION LEADS TO ARRAIGNMENT *Wastewater Treatment Operator Worked Illegally*

SACRAMENTO – The State Water Resources Control Board and the Monterey County District Attorney announced the arraignment Tuesday of John Ekizian on three misdemeanor charges of operating a wastewater treatment plant without a license as required by law.

Responding to a citizen's complaint, state and regional water board investigators inspected the Monterey County treatment plant. Investigators determined that Ekizian, 51, of Santa Cruz, had been working without a Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certificate for the last 28 months.

On Tuesday, Ekizian asked for more time so his attorney could be present. Monterey County Superior Court Judge Sam Lavorato granted a continuance until Sept. 19, 2006. The judge allowed Ekizian to remain out of custody and on bail as long as he obeys all laws and does not operate a waste water treatment plant without a license.

The charges allege that during the last year, Ekizian contracted to operate and maintain the San Lucas County Water District's Wastewater Treatment Plant without the required Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Certificate.

Ekizian had represented himself to the Water District and to the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board as a certified Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator.

"The Water Board supports the criminal prosecution of persons who knowingly operate wastewater facilities without the required certification and thereby jeopardize the safe operation of those facilities," said Reed Sato, chief of the State Water Board's Office of Enforcement.

The Water Board has created a new Office of Enforcement to aid local prosecutors in bringing water quality protection cases.

Ekizian faces up to six months in jail and/or \$25,000 in fines.

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